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CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES
UNDER ARTICLE 18 OF THE CONVENTION

Initial reports of States Parties

SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIET NAM

V.84-91887

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INTRODUCTION

"One man is some worth, ten women are no worth" : this maxim epitomizes Vietnamese women's social status through the centuries down to the 1945 Revolution. Before 1945 women in Viet Nam were the most oppressed stratum of an oppressed people, suffering from the triple yoke of colonialism, feudalism and sex discrimination.

Against such a background one may realize the tremendous significance of the August 1945 Revolution which ushered in the era of emancipation for the whole Vietnamese nation and for Vietnamese women in particular. The latter have been fortunate in so far as "promotion of equality between the sexes" was inscribed among the ten basic tasks laid down by the original political platform of our Party in 1930. To understand this early concern for women's cause among Vietnamese revolutionaries we have to recall that in spite of their lowly social position Vietnamese women have had a long tradition of outstanding patriotic struggle from national heroines such as the Trung sisters (first century D.C.) and Lady Triệu (third century D.C.) to the latter day "long-haired army".(1)

Ever since 1930 and particularly after 1954 women's liberation has been gradually promoted through various Party, Government and trade union resolutions :

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(1) "Long-haired army" : so were called southern women active in the political mass protest against foreign aggression and occupation of the South before 1975.

- Party resolutions N° 152 and N° 153 (1967) ; 7 June 1984 party instruction

- Government decreee N° 31 (1967)

- Trade union resolution N° 2 (1966).

The governing approach may be summed up as follows : "Women's emancipation (...) has emerged and is being tackled as a major issue of strategic significance (...), as a truly national policy issue." (Party resolution N° 153/1967). And President Ho Chi Minh himself found simple but illuminating words to convey this :"Speaking of women means speaking of half our society. If women are not liberated, then half mankind is left unfreed."

In view of the aforementioned background and historical process, the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women adopted by the General Assembly in 1979 appeared as an international codification of goals, principles and objectives that have been to a large extent already charted and progressively implemented in Viet Nam ever since the foundation of our Party and of our state. The Convention being however a most international instrument, does contain elements that Viet Nam should turn its attention to so as to keep up with the pace of world progress regarding the promotion of equality between the sexes.

Part I

THE LEGAL STATUS OF VIETNAMESE WOMEN
(Implementation of articles 1,2,3,9,15 of the Convention)

The principle of equality between the sexes was devoted three articles (1, 9 and 18) in the first Supreme Law adopted in 1946 by the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam, was reaffirmed in the 1959 Constitution and given more specific and comprehensive legal expression in the latest Constitution promulgated by the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam in 1980 :

- Article 63 : "Women and men have equal rights in all respects - in political, economic, cultural, social and family life.

The State and society are responsible for raising the political, cultural, scientific, technical and professional standards of women, and constantly improving their role in society.

The State establishes work conditions suited to women's needs. Women and men receive equal pay for equal work. Women are entitled to pre- and post-natal paid leave if they are workers or office employees, or to maternity allowances if they are cooperative members.

The State and society ensure the development of maternity homes, crèches, kindergartens, community dining-halls and other social amenities to create favourable conditions for women to work, study and rest."

The supreme legislative instrument also guarantees women's legal capacity through their organization, the Women's Union. As stipulated by Article 86 of the 1980 Constitution : "The Council of State, (...), and the Viet Nam Women's Union have the right to submit draft laws to the National Assembly."

Women's legal rights in marriage and family life are carefully enunciated in the Law on Marriage and Family promulgated in 1960. Article 1 stipulates : "The State guarantees the full implementation of free and progressive marriage wherein monogamy, equality between spouses are ensured and women's and children's rights protected ...". Forced matrimony, premature marriage(1), physical abuse of the wife, divorce proceedings by the husband while the wife is pregnant or the infant is under twelve months are forbidden (Ibidem, articles 2, 3, 27). On the other hand, the progressive outlook of the Law on Marriage can be illustrated by the following :

- Article 23 : "Children born out of wedlock (...) enjoy the same rights and assume the same obligations as legitimate ones."

- Article 29 : "In case of divorce the allotment of property will be based on the labour contributed by each side, on the property at stake and on the specific situation of the family. Labour in the home is considered as productive labour."

- Article 14 : "Both husband and wife are free to choose their occupation, to engage in political, cultural and social activities."

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(1) The Law fixes a minimal marrying age : 18 for women and 20 for men (Article 6).

- Article 19 : "Sons and daughters enjoy equal rights and assume equal obligations within the family."

At present we are in the process of elaborating a penal code. The draft (completed in June 1984) defines 12 types of violation of women's and children's rights to be punished by law, from rape to abuse or mistreatment of parents, spouse or children. Most worthy of explicit mention is Article 138 penalizing open discrimination against women :"Anyone who resorts to violence or to any other serious act to hinder women's participation in political, economic, cultural and social activities on an equal footing with men will be reprimanded, or sentenced to up to one year's re-education without detention, or to 3 months' to one year's detention." A labour code is also currently being drafted which will comprise a whole chapter devoted to women workers'(1) specific rights. In the face of the law, women are treated as equals of m[illegible] By virtue of article 5 of the Regulations on the organization of the people's Court (July 1981) : "The Court rules according to the principle of equality of all citizens before the law, without discrimination of sex." The last but not least important aspect in women's legal status besides the way they are treated by the law, lies in their participation as law-makers themselves : at present among Vietnamese women officials there are one vice-minister of Justice, one deputy High Justice, one Judge of the High Civil Court and one representative lawyer on the Law Committee of the National Assembly that took part in the drafting of the 1980 Constitution.

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(1) The drafting of this chapter has been entrusted to the Women Workers' Bureau within the Labour Ministry.

As may be seen above Vietnamese legislation makes ample room for women's exercise of their legal rights on a par with men, provided naturally that they are fully aware of and determined to use these rights (Part III will deal with this aspect of the problem).

Part II

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION IN THE VARIOUS FIELDS

A. IN POLITICAL AND PUBLIC LIFE
(Articles 7 and 8 of the Convention)

By virtue of the Constitution, "All citizens, regardless of their (...) sex, (...) have the right to vote upon reaching the age of eighteen, and to stand for election (...) at all levels upon attaining the age of twenty-one" (Article 57). In practice Vietnamese women are dedicated voters, accounting for nearly 13 out of 23 million votes in the national and provincial elections of 1981 and 1983.

Women's representation at the National Assembly shows marked progress :

1946 (1st National Assembly) : 10 women (2.4%)
1981 : 108 women (21.7%)

of whom 31 are young women under 28 (29% of all women representatives). Besides, two women are on the Standing

Committee and one woman is deputy-chairperson (a member of a Central Highland ethnic minority) of the Supreme Legislative Body.

Figures for the provincial and district People's Council elections :

Provincial : 1959 = 7.8%
1983 = 22.5%

District : 1959 = 0
1983 = 22.1%

In the executive branch, women's participation has tangibly grown especially at the lower levels :

- Female heads and deputy-heads of divisions and departments :

. District level	: 1959 = 162	1983 = 2503
. Provincial level	: 1975 = 551	1979 = 2298
. Central level	: 1959 = 3	1983 = 135

- Female chairpersons or deputy-chairpersons of People's administrative committees :

. Communal level	: 1959 = 0	1983 = 788
. District/township level	: 1959 = 0	1983 = 92
. Provincial/City level	: 1959 = 0	1983 = 7

- Women ministers and vice-ministers = 17

A third area of female involvement in public life is women's presence in the Trade Union. At present 85% of female salary-earners belong to the Trade Union and 19 women hold leading positions at the various levels of the Trade Union organization.

Nor are Vietnamese women absent from international public life, a sphere with a traditionally low female participation. Between 1970 and 1984 the number of women active in the diplomatic service has quadrupled. And through their mass organization, the Women's Union, Vietnamese women entertain contacts and relations with over 140 women's and other non-governmental organizations throughout the world.

II-B. IN ECONOMIC LIFE

(Article 11 of the Convention)

Quite early the Vietnamese government has realized the decisive significance of women as a vast source of social labour and accordingly formulated a comprehensive and consistent policy to promote female employment embodied in Decree N° 31 (8/3/1967) : "The further promotion of female labour force assumes a very great political and economic significance while representing at the same time a pressing task for (...) the further development of women's rich capabilities (...) and a step forward toward the emancipation of women and toward sex equality (...).

In the State sector (...) women should be actively and systematically trained and assisted to develop their cultural, technical and professional knowledge, their command of economic and public management so as to progress toward a higher percentage of skilled women workers, constantly raising women's labour productivity while firmly promoting women to leading positions at various levels". This governmental decree has been concretized in a number of

joint ministerial circulars from the Ministries of Home Affairs, Labour, Health, Education and from the State Committee for Science and Technology.

After several decades, women's participation in economic life has reached a fairly high level :

1982 Proportion of women among :

- the social work force = 51.3%
- civil servants and state employed workers = 46% (as compared with 5% in 1955)
- agricultural workers = 42.3%
- industrial workers = 46.5%
- textile and garment workers = 79% (1983)
- research, health, education workers = 51.8% (Health = 64%, Education = 65.2%).

With regard to their status in economic life, women enjoy practical equality of remuneration with men given the same work (cf. Constitution, Article 63) and are increasingly represented in positions of leadership : in 1959 there were only 4 female directors of companies or factories but in 1982 the number was 191.

In consistent fashion the State has seen to it that mothers of infants may take up an occupation by setting up a nationwide network of crèches and kindergartens :

	Number of crèches	Number of children in crèches
1976	35,534	661,654
1983	42,720	1,139,871 (22.7% of infants in the target age-group)

It should be stressed that a majority of these crèches are located in the countryside (28,255).

	Number of kindergartens	Number of children in kindergartens
1976-77	24,700	778,000
1982-83	50,700	1,468,000

The State also takes care of working women's health, particularly in relation to their reproductive role(1). Working women are entitled to a number of paid days of leave in cases of miscarriage, insertion of contraceptive devices, of sterilization or pregnancy termination. Generally speaking, women are not taken on in particularly heavy occupations such as mining, driving of trucks over 3.5 tons or locomotive driving but women engaged in relatively exacting labour enjoy special provisions (Joint circular N° 8 issued on 24 March 1962 by the Ministries of Home Affairs, Labour and Health). Working women are entitled to 75 paid days of maternity leave (before 1983 only 60 days)(2). Working mothers of infants under 12 months are allowed to take one hour off per day to nurse or feed their babies. Mothers of children aged one to seven may take up to 20 days leave per year (with a per diem sickness allowance) to take care of their children when these are sick. Employers are not allowed to dismiss female workers during pregnancy, nor during maternity or sickness leave. Women's retirement age is 55, five years lower than men's (60).

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(1) Joint Labour-Health circular N° 05/TT-LB issued on 1 June 1968 focuses specifically on rural women workers.

(2) Women working in mountainous areas are entitled to one extra month of maternity leave.

While considerable progress has been registered by Vietnamese women in the field of labour and employment, the need is clearly felt for an exploration of further possibilities of advance : the State Committee for Social Sciences is sponsoring a national research project on women with four foci, among them the relation between Vietnamese women's emancipation and the elaboration of our country's long-term socio-economic development strategy.

II-C. IN SOCIAL AND CULTURAL LIFE

(Articles 10, 12, 13, 14 of the Convention)

Besides the previously cited article 63 of the Constitution and Decree N° 31 (3/1967) the Viet Nam Women's Union programme of action for 1981-1985 also underscores the need to upgrade women's cultural, scientific, technical and professional level in order to ensure their full participation in social and cultural life. With its longstanding campaign among rank and file women round the motto : "Outstanding in society, able at home", the Women's Union is in fact bent on gradually eradicating the traditional stereotype of women's unique or primordial vocation and duty as homekeepers.

Upon the liberation of the northern part of our country in 1954, our State immediately concentrated on eliminating illiteracy, which prevailed to a larger extent among women, and succeeded in its efforts in 1958. In the South illiteracy continued to exist until liberation in 1975 : within two years (by 1977), thanks particularly to the eager and effective role of the Women's Union, illiteracy was liquidated, an achievement commended by UNESCO. Today the profile of the female school and graduate

population appears as follows :

- 47% of primary and secondary school students
- 50.6% of vocational school students
- 38% of university students
- 10% of doctoral and postdoctoral graduates (440).

As for women's contingent of scientific and technical staff, figures are promising :

- Technicians : 1975 = 36.2% 1979 = 41.6%
- Agronomists : 1982 = 22.1%
- Light industry engineers : 1975 = 600 1980 = 766
- Doctors : 1982 = 47.3%
- University teachers : 1976 = 18.5% 1981 = 25.6%

Furthermore, within the framework of the ongoing educational reform, demography and family planning and vocational guidance have been incorporated into the senior secondary curriculum, a measure particularly beneficial to schoolgirls.

If Vietnamese women have made appreciable headway in the field of education and science, their rise in cultural life also deserves special mention. In 1979, 35% of all culture and art workers were women. The Women's Union enjoys a daily 30-minute radio programme (broadcast twice in the day) and a weekly television programme. In 1983 women accounted for 26% of the leading positions in the radio and television services. Since 1957 a Women's Publishing House has been set up, which, up to 1982, published 789 works by women authors or related to women.

II-D. IN MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE
(Articles 5, 6, 16 of the Convention)

A patent truth is that as long as women do not enjoy equality in the home there is no true and complete sex equality. In view of this, women's rights in matrimony as laid down in the precited Law on Marriage and the Family, assume special significance. Besides the rights and proscriptions mentioned earlier, the following should also be singled out :

- Article 2 : Remaining vestiges of feudal matrimony should be eradicated : forced marriage, respect for the husband but contempt for the wife, disregard for children's rights and interests", which is particularly in keeping with Article 5 of the Convention.

- Article 8 : "The widow has the right to re-marry ; in this case her rights regarding her children and property shall be guaranteed."

- Article 12 : "In the family, husband and wife are equal in all respects."

- Article 31 : "After divorce, both spouses continue enjoying the same rights and assuming the same responsibilities towards their children."

According to our law, a Vietnamese woman who marries a foreigner will retain her nationality unless she explicitly applies for adoption of her husband's citizenship.

Intimately connected with conjugal relations and happiness is the question of family planning. The drive

for consciously assumed parenthood in Viet Nam was started in the former decades but received a new vigorous impulse in 1980. The Health Ministry and the Women's Union assume joint responsibility for this campaign, the former for the technical services and the latter for the mobilization work. Increased enrollment of media support (as evidenced by their attendance at the April 1983 joint meeting for the evaluation of three years' (1980-83) campaigning) helped expand the impact of this crucial effort. The Women's Union has launched a new three-year campaign starting in 1983, and in April 1984 the campaign assumed national significance with the creation of the National Committee on Population and Family Planning chaired by a Vice-Chairman of the Council of Ministers. Thanks to these efforts, at present 30% of the women of child-bearing age have adopted some form of contraception. The clear link between planned parenthood and infant mortality can be seen in the falling rate of newborn mortality :

1975 = 1.5%
1982 = 0.8%

and the relatively low child mortality rate : less than 3%.

The Women's Union's role in defending women's rights in marriage and family life does not limit itself to family planning ; the Union will officially interfere to protect women who are victims of mistreatment, humiliation or beatings on the part of their husbands. The Women's Union is generally represented on the jury when a divorce case or a case of violation of the Law on Marriage is heard. Besides, the Union, through its local branches, processes thousands of letters each year asking for guidance or assistance in conjugal matters. Most recently, in an effort to further facilitate rank and file women's contacts

with their mass organization on matters of intimate concern to them, the Union has been experimenting the setting up of "Family Clubs" in Ha Noi and Ho Chi Minh City that serve as information and guidance centres on marriage and family relations. On the basis of this experience similar clubs will be opened in other cities and towns.

Defending women against debasement and exploitation demands that prostitution and more particularly procuring be rooted out. The draft Penal Code aforementioned punishes traffic in women (Article 128) and the organization or procuring of prostitution (Article 199). In the South where, prior to 1975, prostitution constituted a real social scourge, the Union has opened a number of "schools for a new life" to help former prostitutes cure their eventual diseases, complete their basic education, go through some vocational training and eventually assist them in finding a new occupation and setting up a home.

In a long-range perspective, the Women's Union together with the Youth League campaign widely for a "home of the new culture" built on harmonious, progressive relations among members of the family, implying inter alia equality between husband and wife, brothers and sisters.

Nearly 25 years have elapsed since the 1960 Law on Marriage. In between the South has been liberated and the whole country reunified. The evident need arises for a revision of this law. A nationwide survey on the implementation of the 1960 Law was started in 1982 to provide the groundwork for the new Law. The drafting has been entrusted to five competent bodies, the Ministry of Justice, the Supreme Court, the Committee on ethnic minorities, the Youth League and the Women's Union, under the chairmanship of the latter.

Part III

THE GOVERNMENTAL AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL STRUCTURES ENSURING WOMEN'S AND CHILDREN'S RIGHTS (Articles 1 to 16 of the Convention)

Law and policies remain dead letter if the appropriate organizational infrastructure does not exist to translate them into realities. In Viet Nam a whole complex of structures take care of women's and children's rights and welfare, first and foremost the Women's Union already referred to. It is a nationwide mass organization structured down to the grassroots level(1), enjoying privileged consultative status on women's affairs with the Party and the government : the President (or her alternate) is entitled to attend women-related meetings of the Council of Ministers and voice her opinion in this regard. Among the four officially stated functions of the Union is the responsibility to coordinate with the various related services as well as to follow up and monitor the implementation of laws, policies and provisions concerning women's and children's interests. The Union is also expected to petition the State for eventual additional policies and provisions in this respect.

As other developing societies, Viet Nam has a "young" population. It is only fitting that in 1983 a Council for Female Youth should have been established within the Youth League to focus on the specific needs of adolescent girls and young women (16 to 28 years old, i.e. 27% of the female population).

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(1) At present the Women's Union has 500 full time staff members.

Women accounting for 51.3% of the social work force in Viet Nam the Labour Ministry includes a Women Workers' Bureau that is in charge of such aspects as distribution of female manpower, salary and health policies for women workers, etc ... . Besides, at each work place exists a women affairs' section in the trade union to ensure that women there are granted and do exert all the rights and enjoy all the benefits to which they are entitled : for instance when discussing job or salary promotions a representative of the women affairs' section will be invited by the management to sit in and have a say in favour of the female staff.

Recently the need has been felt to set up a structure in charge of research work on women's issues at the national level. Consequently a women's studies division within the Social Sciences Committee is being created that draws from interprofessional and pluridisciplinary expertise in this field.

Part IV

THE PRIORITY POLICIES AIMED AT SPEEDING DE FACTO EQUALITY BETWEEN THE SEXES
(Article 4 of the Convention)

The profile of Vietnamese women can be thoroughly appreciated only if one is aware of our State's specific wholistic approach to women's emancipation :"The channel for mobilization of women is not confined to the sole mass organizations but should besides include the various eco-

nomic and administrative branches, be achieved through the various laws, policies, provisions, and take the form of cultural, scientific, literary or artistic activities..." (Party Resolution N° 152, 10-1-1967) ; "The policy of the Party towards women cadres ... is not aimed at a charity-like benignancy", it consists in "actively fostering the capabilities of women, boldly employing and promoting the latter ; (...) once promoted they should be further encouraged to upgrade their competence and judiciously employed. (...) Where large numbers of women are employed there should be many women executives, where there are many women executives the leadership should include women." (Party Resolution N° 153, 1967). Such approach may be considered preventive : just as in medecine preventing is better than curing, in the question of sex equality creating suitable conditions for the promotion of women's emancipation is more effective and far-reaching than simply combatting sex discrimination.

As can be seen Viet Nam's type of "positive discrimination" in favour of women revolves around two priorities : priority in training, re-training and upgrading through school enrollment recommended quotas, measures to ensure that mothers are enrolled, etc ... ; and priority in job promotion : this does not mean lower criteria for women candidates but when both a male and a female candidate meet the requirements the woman will be preferred, if any relaxation of the criteria is allowed it will only be with regard to secondary aspects such as age or seniority.

Conclusion

AN OVERVIEW OF AREAS OF FAST AND OF THOSE OF SLOW PROGRESS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION IN VIET NAM

It is tangibly evident that in the course of four decades Vietnamese women have shed the shackles of long centuries of oppression and sex discrimination and by leaps and bounds have started taking their destiny in their own hands : it may be said without exaggeration, that between the average woman of 1945 and her sister of the Women's Decade exists a gap measured not in terms of one or two generations but in terms of century.

We may single out three main areas of remarkable advancement :

a) In Viet Nam the overall legislation and policy and regulation framework exists to ensure women's full exercise of their rights. Moreover our State pays attention to revising and adjusting its policies regarding women in keeping with the evolving situation of the country(1).

b) The mass character of women's progress in the various spheres of social life as illustrated by aforementioned figures : in Viet Nam women's cause is truly

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(1) Since the 1960's when nearly all major Party and government-policies concerning women were adopted and especially in the challenging postwar reconstruction that gives rise to innumerable new and complex tasks, the attention on fostering female staff and leadership has somewhat slackened leading to the felt need for a new impetus. In sensitive response, the Party issued a

.... (20)

a grassroots movement.

c) The role and action of a strong nationwide women's organization : the Women's Union which provides women with a permanent and effective spokesperson.

However, in the face of the heavy legacy left by history, women's emancipation in Viet Nam cannot be achieved overnight even if the consciousness and the will are there.

a) This is particularly clear when we remember the gap that needs to be gradually bridged between the levels and extents of women's liberation in the North and in the recently freed South.

b) On the other hand, if compared to the past, Vietnamese women's cultural, scientific and technical level has been remarkably raised, objectively it does not yet meet the needs of the present stage of social development. Further efforts will be required from both the State and women themselves.

c) An area where the determination is high but results not yet as desired is family planning : while the campaign for planned parenthood has obtained fairly satisfactory results among public salary earners and in the urban areas, it still meets with a measure of inertia and even resistance in rural areas, particularly in the South. In the coming years the family planning drive will have to focus on the countryside and women who are not civil servants.

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pertinent and timely instruction (dated 7 June, 1984) entitled : "Some urgent problems of work related to female cadres."

From this report it can be seen that Vietnamese legislation and institutions accord with the spirit of nearly all the clauses of the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women. The Convention is perceived in Viet Nam as a worldwide process both per se (through the evolution of society itself) and consciously assumed (through women's efforts for their own emancipation) to which Viet Nam wholly adheres : by ratifying the Convention Viet Nam has officially linked Vietnamese women's emancipation to the worldwide movement for sex equality.

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CZECHOSLOVAK SOCIALIST REPUBLIC

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During the Second World Conference for the United Nations Decade for Women, which took place in 1980, the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic enthusiastically associated itself with the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women. The reasons for this decision are altogether understandable. The achievement of genuine equality for women in all areas of life was one of the principal goals pursued by the Czechoslovak people during their struggle for national and social liberation at the time of the Second World War. And although, in a formal sense, the equality of men and women had been proclaimed as long ago as 1920 during the period of the first bourgeois republic, the prerequisites for the achievement of all-round equality for women were created only during the initial phase in the laying of the foundations of socialism. A historical achievement of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and a major success of the socialist social order may be seen in the fact that, within a relatively brief period, a fundamental transformation was wrought in the status of women in Czechoslovakia.

In today's Czechoslovakia women are genuine and fully-fledged creators and consumers of the spiritual and material goods of society. High praise has been given to the contributions of women to the building of the socialist society in the documents of the Eleventh Congress of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, which, inter alia, contain the following observations:

The equal status of women in Czechoslovak society is one of the generally recognized achievements of socialism. However, even under socialist conditions, there is no such thing as the automatic implementation of the principle of the full equality of women, all the more considering that over a period of centuries women were relegated to a position of inequality. Despite the fact that in Czechoslovakia all the formal and real guarantees for the genuine equality of women and men in all areas of life have been created, it is constantly necessary to seek new opportunities for strengthening the position of women in society. As noted at the most recent Congress of the Czechoslovak Union of Women in June 1984, the leading Czechoslovak Party and State organs are fully aware of this task and are determined to create the conditions needed to guard against any disruption in the effort to achieve the full equality of women and to ensure that women have more time for public activities, self-education and, above all, the raising of their children. In pursuit of this objective, organizational and material conditions will be created to improve the operations of the service sector, the retail network, the schools and pre-school institutions, and also the performance of the municipal transport systems.

The high level of education and vocational training enjoyed by women, their massive involvement in the labour process and their broad participation in political life - and thus in dealing with all the vital issues in the life of society - are factors which, if one compares the situation elsewhere in the world, are not only rare, but also provide the necessary premises for the successful conclusion, in a relatively short time, of the process involved in securing full and genuine equality for Czechoslovak women.

As already noted, Czechoslovakia today has achieved such successes in ensuring the equality of women and men in all areas that the preparation and submission of a report on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women presents us with no real problems. On the contrary, there are a number of areas in which the spiritual and material life of Czechoslovak society, a society in which women also participate as fully-fledged members and whose fruits they equally enjoy, has evolved beyond the objectives established in the Convention.

The Czechoslovak Socialist Republic welcomes and wholeheartedly endorses all the steps taken by the United Nations and its specialized agencies for the purpose

of advancing the status of women throughout the world. We regard the attainment of full equality for women as an integral part of a multifaceted effort to create a world of social justice and a world free of the threat of war. Accordingly, guided by the motto of the United Nations Decade for Women - Equality, Development and Peace - we are endeavouring in a concrete way to promote the transformation of the struggle for the comprehensive equality of women into a world-wide effort drawing upon all the positive accomplishments thus far achieved at the national level.

* * *

The equality of women in Czechoslovakia in all areas of public life is guaranteed at the highest possible level. The attainment of full equality for women and men is an inalienable element of the socialist concept of development, the objective of which is to ensure the all-round development and fulfilment of every member of society. In view of the fact that over a long historical period women in our country occupied a position of inequality, it was first of all necessary to bring about the material and legal guarantees for successful progress towards their emancipation. This objective has now been fully achieved in Czechoslovakia. The absence of discrimination in the areas of education, the selection of an occupation and the use of leisure time, as well as in respect of opportunities for participation in social and public life, is guaranteed in Czechoslovakia by the country's entire socio-economic system.

The efforts aimed at ensuring that women are equal partners with men are based on the fact that the basic pre-condition for the achievement of equality for women in society is their full involvement in the labour process. This not only assures economic independence for women, but also enables them to fulfil themselves through active participation in the life of society. Accordingly, the work of the competent organs and public organizations has been directed primarily at the following objectives:

- The creation for women of reliable employment positions offering the right kind of working conditions;

- The creation of favourable living conditions for women, including the expansion of the service sector to make it easier for them to perform their role as mothers and in the family;

- The proper moulding of public opinion regarding the status of women within the family and in public life.

At the present time, women account for 53 per cent of all specialists performing intellectual work. However, despite this favourable ratio of women in regard to higher and secondary education, attention will continue to be directed at upgrading their skills and qualifications and at improving their opportunities for self-education as a necessary condition for their appointment to senior and leadership positions.

In formulating the State's socio-economic development policy, the political and government agencies take full account of the question of how best to ensure the comprehensive and all-round participation of women in the life of society. The public organizations making up the Czechoslovak National Front are also involved in the formulation and implementation of this policy and in the evaluation of its results. These organizations include, above all, the Revolutionary Trade Union Movement, the Czechoslovak Union of Women, the Central Co-operation Council, the Socialist Youth League and others. A similar situation also exists with respect to the formulation and implementation of branch-wide and regional plans, for which the ministries and territorial governmental agencies are responsible.

In a formal sense, the equality of women in Czechoslovakia was legally ensured as long ago as 29 February 1920, the date of the adoption of the country's first Constitution (Law No. 121 in the Collection of Laws and Decrees). However, it was only the Constitution of 9 May 1948, in its article 2, paragraph 3, that contained specific and real guarantees of the equality of women. The principles of this Constitution were applied and further developed in the Constitution of the Czechslovak Socialist Republic adopted by the National Assembly on 11 July 1960.

The equality of women and men in Czechoslovakia is ensured by the national Constitution, article 27 of which guarantees women equal status in the family, at the work-place and in public affairs, while article 20, paragraph 3, specifically proclaims that within the family, at the work-place and in public life women and men enjoy equal rights. These constitutional principles, based on a fundamental postulate of the Czechoslovak legal system, namely that of non-discrimination, have in the course of time been given specific form in numerous laws, among which particular attention should be given to the Family Law (No. 94/1963 of the Collection). In the most specific possible terms, this law establishes the equality of women and men in marriage and the equality of both parents with regard to their children. The Labour Law Code (No. 65/1965 of the Collection) similarly lays down the right of women to equality of status with men in the labour process, in addition to which it guarantees that women shall be afforded conditions enabling them to perform work in keeping with their physiological capabilities, with consideration given to their social role in the bearing and raising of children. The equality of women and men is also enshrined in a whole series of other Czechoslovak legal instruments.

These legislative and other measures lay heavy stress on facilitating in every possible way the situation of working women and, particularly, working mothers. Proof of this may be seen in the extensive system of direct and indirect assistance for mothers and families with children. For example, in 1983, 36.6 billion Czechoslovak koruny were spent out of the State budget and other public funds on social assistance for families with children.

Another factor helping to create excellent conditions for the achievement of equality by women is the fact that women represent 30 per cent of the country's elected government officeholders. In the Federal Assembly, the nation's highest legislative organ, women represent 28 per cent of the deputies, in the Czech National Council 28 per cent, and in the Slovak National Council 29.3 per cent. In 1981, 30.8 per cent of the persons elected to the national committees (the agencies of State authority and administration at all levels) were women; of this total, 37.2 per cent of the women were elected to the regional national committees, 34 per cent to the district national committees, and 30.5 per cent to the municipal and local national committees.

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PART I OF THE CONVENTION

Article 20 of the Constitution of Czechoslovakia establishes that all citizens - and this means men and women - have equal rights and equal responsibilities. Paragraph 3 of this article states: "Men and women enjoy equal rights in the family, in the work process and in public activities". Article 21 of the Constitution stipulates that all citizens have a right to work and to remuneration for their work in accordance with its quantity, quality and social significance. According to article 22 of the Constitution, and other articles as well, all workers have a right to rest and leisure time, as well as a right to material security in old age and in the case of the loss of the ability to work (disability). All citizens also have a right to education.

Should any woman's legal rights be threatened, she has the right to seek remedy from the court or from some other legally constituted body.

The Constitution provides special protection for mothers and children in article 26, which states: "Maternity, matrimony and the family are under the protection of the State".

However, the Constitution of Czechoslovakia does not limit itself merely to an affirmation of equality, i.e. equal rights for all citizens. Article 20, paragraph 4, refers to the fact that the workers' society ensures the equality of the citizens by creating equal opportunities and equal conditions for them in all areas of social life.

With regard to article 6 of the Convention, it should be noted that, in accordance with paragraph 246 of the Criminal Code, trafficking in women is punishable by the loss of freedom for a period of from one to five years, and that in cases in which the criminal is a member of an organized gang or commits a criminal act against a woman of less than eighteen years of age or with the intention of using the woman for the purposes of prostitution, the penalty is increased from three to eight years. It is necessary to add that although this crime is mentioned in the Criminal Code, in actual practice it does not occur.

The protection of women against exploitation in the form of prostitution is ensured under paragraph 204 of the Criminal Code, according to which anyone who hires, compels or seduces another for the purpose of prostitution, or anyone who realizes a profit through the prostitution of another, is liable to imprisonment for a period of from one to five years.

PART II OF THE CONVENTION

The provisions of the Constitution of Czechoslovakia are observed not only in the document as such, but also in the ordinary legislation, where the basic legal instruments in the area of electoral, family and labour law also make direct reference to the equal status of women.

In paragraph 3 of Law No. 44/1971 of the Collection of Laws on Elections to the Federal Assembly, it is stipulated that citizens have the right to take part in elections inter alia "with no distinction as to sex". Similar provisions are also contained in other laws currently in force regulating elections to representative organs (Laws SNF 53/1971, 54/1971, 55/1971 and 56/1971 of the Collection). These laws also provide for a passive electoral right. For example, paragraph 39, subparagraph 1, of Law No. 36/1964 of the Collection on the organization of the courts and the elections of judges provides that anyone may be elected judge who has the right to vote in elections to representative organs and who satisfies the other qualifications that are established in this law, but that in no way imply any limitation on the individual's electoral right on the basis of sex.

Women in Czechoslovakia are entitled to discharge the functions of any leadership position and to participate in the work of public organizations on an equal footing with men.

With respect to citizenship, in principle women enjoy equal rights with men. Equality in this area in general is directly anchored in a number of constitutional provisions (article 5 of the Constitutional Law on the Czechoslovak Federation, No. 143/1968 of the Collection, in the wording of Constitutional Law No. 125/1970 of the Collection), which speak of citizens (and of citizenship) with no distinction on the basis of sex.

The legal regulation of citizenship in Czechoslovakia undoubtedly reflects the reality of the situation, namely that Czechoslovakia is a federated State consisting of two fully equal republics: the Czech and the Slovak. In this context, citizenship is regarded as single in the sense that a citizen of the Federation, i.e. the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, is simultaneously a citizen of one of the republics, either the Czech Socialist Republic or the Slovak Socialist Republic.

The concept underlying the legal regulation of citizenship is based primarily on the principle of ius sanguinis, appropriately supplemented by the principle of ius soli. In principle, it makes no essential difference in legal terms whether the person involved is a man or woman (see Law No. 194/1949 of the Collection on the acquisition or loss of Czechoslovak citizenship in the wording of Law No. 72/1958 of the Collection; Law No. 65/1968 of the Collection; Law SNS No. 206/1968 of the Collection; and Law CNS No. 39/1969 of the Collection).

A female Czechoslovak citizen who marries an alien or stateless person does not lose her citizenship (paragraph 8, subparagraph 1, Law No. 673/1958 of the Collection). Similarly, the loss of Czechoslovak citizenship by either of the spouses has no effect on the citizenship of the other spouse, so long as this situation has not been otherwise regulated by a special provision. According to Czechoslovak law, marriage to an alien does not result in an automatic change of citizenship or an automatic loss of citizenship (cf. paragraph 8, subparagraph 2, Law No. 73/1958 of the Collection).

The law guarantees women equal rights with men with respect to the citizenship of their children, regardless of whether or not a marriage has been concluded.

Equality between men and women with respect to the acquisition of citizenship by the child is guaranteed as follows:

(a) With respect to the citizenship of children in the Czechoslovak Federation, the law stipulates that from the day of its birth the child acquires the citizenship of that republic of which both its parents are citizens. If the parents are not citizens of the same republic (one of the parents being a citizen of the Czech Socialist Republic and the other a citizen of the Slovak Socialist Republic), the child acquires the citizenship of the republic on whose territory it was born. If the child is born to such parents abroad, it acquires the citizenship of its mother. However, this does not exclude the possibility in such cases of the parents' reaching an agreement and selecting for the child the citizenship of the other republic (cf. paragraph 6 of Law No. 165/1968 of the Collection; paragraph 8 of Law SNS No. 206 of the Collection; and paragraph 8 of Law CNS No. 39/1969 of the Collection).

(b) If one of the parents is a citizen of Czechoslovakia and the other an alien (a citizen of another State), the child acquires the citizenship of Czechoslovakia and, at the same time, of the republic, Czech or Slovak, of which one of its parents is a citizen (cf. paragraph 6, subparagraph 3, of Law No. 165/1968 of the Collection; paragraph 8, subparagraph 4, of Law SNS No. 206/1968 of the Collection; and paragraph 8, subparagraph 4, of Law SNS No. 39/1969 of the Collection).

PART III OF THE CONVENTION

Article 24 of the Czechoslovak Constitution of 1960 states that all citizens have the right to education. This right is ensured through a system of elementary education and a network of free schools which, on an increasing basis, are providing complete secondary education, both general and specialized, as well as

higher education. On 22 March 1984, the Federal Assembly of Czechoslovakia adopted Law No. 29 on the System of Elementary and Secondary Schools (School Law), which requires ten years of compulsory school attendance until the age of 16 years - 8 years of elementary school and 2 years of secondary school. In this way, secondary education is guaranteed for all.

Czechoslovak legislation ensures women equal rights with men in education in all areas: science, culture, vocational training and job hiring. Of the previously mentioned figure of 53 per cent women specialists in various areas of the national economy, women specialists with secondary education account for more than 60 per cent, while the number of women specialists with higher education totals nearly 40 per cent.

This is reflected in the number of girls in secondary and higher educational establishments. In the 1982/83 academic year the figures for school attendance were as follows:

Secondary schools (high schools)	62.7% girls
Secondary special schools and special schools	60.8% girls
Trade schools	37.7% girls

Of the students attending the higher educational establishments of all categories, 43.1 per cent were young women, with 44.5 per cent of this number attending the daytime departments. Of this figure, the breakdown by school type is as follows:

Technical schools	26.0%
Universities	65.5%
Schools of economics	63.3%
Agricultural schools	35.3%
Art schools	37.7%

From the point of view of their specialization, the percentages for women specialists are as follows:

General	53.0%
Technical subjects	20.2%
Humanities	77.8%
Agricultural subjects	31.5%
Economic subjects	78.0%

The fact that 98 per cent of Czechoslovak girls enter secondary schools and enrol in educational courses must be regarded as a positive development.

At present, women account for 50.8 per cent of the country's doctors and 75.7 per cent of its children's doctors. A characteristic phenomenon is the increasing number of women (37.7 per cent) employed in establishments of the scientific and technical infrastructure, where in 26 per cent of the cases women hold positions as heads of working groups.

The School Law and Law No. 39/1980 of the Collection on Higher Educational Establishments satisfy the requirements of article 10 of the Convention. Both these laws supplement the previous amendments to the School Law, which from the very emergence of Czechoslovakia as a State in 1918 were consistently influenced by the principle of the equality of both sexes. The steady progress that has been achieved in securing the equality of young men and women in training for their future occupations is attested to by the fact that girls are today even attending schools that provide instruction in what for them are non-traditional areas:

examples are the technical schools, including those teaching mining, forestry and other such subjects. The only exception is in the case of training for working occupations at the specialized secondary colleges (a new type of new secondary school introduced in 1978), instruction at which is to replace the apprenticeship training that has heretofore been provided. For the time being, the practical instruction at these colleges includes certain categories of work for which the labour laws prohibit the hiring of women in view of certain of their specific physiological characteristics (connected with their health and role as mothers), in accordance with the Conventions of the International Labour Organisation No. 45 concerning the Employment of Women on Underground Work, No. 89 concerning Night Work, No. 100 concerning Equal Remuneration for Work of Equal Value, and No. 111 concerning Discrimination in Respect of Employment, all of which have been ratified by Czechoslovakia, along with article 11, paragraph 2 (d) (of the Convention) (cf. paragraph 65, subparagraph 2, of the School Law). The exception in this case cannot be regarded as discriminatory in the spirit of the Convention (see article 4, paragraph 2, of the Convention). Czechoslovak legislation ensures women the opportunity also of studying during their maternity period, both by arranging for the proper conditions of study and by making available students' grants to cover the specific situation of maternity.

In the light of these facts, men and women have equal access to education at teaching establishments of all categories and types, pre-school institutions, schools (extended-day schools), clubs, libraries, boarding establishments and youth homes, as well as at educational consultation centres. All citizens, regardless of sex, have the same access to the various forms of training designed to broaden and deepen their education (post-graduate studies, skill improvement courses, etc.).

Education at all levels in Czechoslovakia is free. Support for the citizens' interests and efforts to acquire a higher level of education is a significant and integral part of government policy. In addition to the free tuition, other factors attesting to the high degree of concern surrounding the area of education are the availability of low-cost housing at youth homes and inexpensive food in the school dining rooms, social grants and special allowances for academic proficiency, the extensive holdings of text books and other learning materials, and the equal opportunities for active participation in sports and cultural activities.

Article 11

In Czechoslovakia the full employment of men and women has been constitutionally guaranteed since as long ago as the beginning of the 1950s. Women (including those on maternity leave) represent 48.1 per cent of the work-force.

The largest percentage of women (80 per cent) are employed in the areas of health care and social welfare; in trade and public dining (74 per cent); and in education (73 per cent). Women represent 41 per cent of all industrial jobholders and 42 per cent of the agricultural work-force. This means that the economic activity of women - i.e. the percentage of working women vis-à-vis the total number of women of employable age - is very high (78.8 per cent), the remaining percentage consisting primarily of young women who are continuing their studies and, to a lesser degree, of women who for one or another valid reason are not working or prefer to devote themselves to homemaking.

Among the measures that have contributed to the achievement of this high level of economic activity by women, the following should be specifically mentioned:

(a) The increase in the number of employed women with higher and secondary education and, in the case of the working occupations, of women trade school graduates;

(b) The increase in the number of jobs with a shorter working day (9 per cent working women);

(c) The improvement in working conditions, particularly at establishments employing women, and the elimination of strenuous physical labour;

(d) The increase in the number of child care centres, particularly during the period 1975-1979, as is clear from the following figures:

- A 34 per cent increase in the number of nurseries, now capable of accommodating 22 per cent of all children under the age of three years;
- A 48 per cent increase in the number of kindergartens, now capable of accommodating 92 per cent of all children from 3 to 6 years of age;
- A 31 per cent increase in the number of school scout units, now capable of accommodating 42 per cent of all children from 6 to 9 years of age.

Women are represented in all the main employment categories. The table below shows the percentage of women (excluding those on maternity leave) in the total number of workers in individual employment categories:

	1982
Wage workers	45.6 per cent
Including:	
Those engaged in physical work	36.2 per cent
Those engaged in intellectual work	57.6 per cent
Members of agricultural co-operatives	44.0 per cent
Other areas	56.1 per cent
Professionals	58.5 per cent

Czechoslovak legislation regarding the employment of women is fully consistent with the Convention. This is reflected primarily in article VII of the Basic Principles of the Labour Code (Law No. 65/1965 of the Collection in the text published under Law No. 55/1975 of the Collection and supplemented by Law No. 72/1982 of the Collection), which, as a generally accepted principle binding in the interpretation of all provisions of the labour law, reads as follows:

> "Women enjoy equal rights with men in the area of employment. Women are to be ensured working conditions enabling them to participate in work in a way that takes into account not only their specific physiological characteristics, but also their social function in bearing, raising and caring for children".

This fundamental principle was later anchored in the Labour Code, specifically in paragraphs 24-26 regarding the guarantee of the right to work and the concept of socially useful work, and further in paragraphs 27-78 on the establishment, modification and termination of employment contracts (dealing specifically also with the protection of pregnant women and mothers of pre-school-age children against dismissal from work), and, above all, in paragraphs 149-162 on the special working conditions of working women in general and of pregnant women and mothers in particular. Individual provisions of the law deal with situations when a particular right, in part or in full, arises only after a specific period of time has elapsed and requires a specific length of service. For example, in determining the amount of the leave entitlement or eligibility for a pension or some other social welfare benefit, the time a woman spends in caring for a child up to the age of

three years is always counted as part of her active service time (see paragraph 103, subparagraph 1 (a), of the Labour Code; paragraph 11, subparagraph 1 (e), of Law No. 121/1975 of the Collection of Social Security Laws in the wording of subsequent directives).

The area of job safety and health has been legally regulated in paragraphs 132-138 of the Labour Code in a manner identical for all workers, and specifically for women in supplementary sections banning certain categories of work (paragraph 150) and dealing with special working conditions for women (paragraphs 153-162). The implementation of these principles is monitored by special State agencies with responsibility for overseeing the area of job safety and health (see Law No. 174/1968 of the Collection of Laws on State and Special Monitoring of Job Safety; and Law No. 20/1966 of the Collection of Laws on the Care and Health of Workers). The staffs of the sanitation and epidemiological centres and of certain other special agencies are also involved in monitoring compliance in this area.

The equality of men and women is also a fundamental principle of the right to social security. The law provides for all the contingencies (social situations) mentioned in article 11, paragraph 1 (e), of the Convention, with the exception of unemployment support. There are no general legal provisions in this area, since unemployment as a social phenomenon does not exist in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. For this reason, in 1975 Czechoslovakia cancelled ILO Convention No. 44 on unemployment and ratified ILO Convention No. 122 on employment policy. The socialist society creates the necessary conditions for the full employment of women. The Government ascribes great importance to their employment, formulating to this end plans for the employment of women that take into account the needs of the national economy, local conditions and the nature of the work performed. As a result of these measures, the level of female employment in Czechoslovakia is among the highest in the world.

However, there are certain people, including women, who for reasons not of their own making may find themselves without work, principally as a result of rationalization or organizational measures. In such situations, the enterprises (socialist organizations) and the State controlled agencies, acting in accordance with special legal provisions (Law No. 74/1970 of the Collection in the wording of Law No. 4/1979 of the Code), reassign the redundant worker to another suitable position or provide material (financial) support during the time he or she is in retraining for another suitable position, paying the worker over a specified period an amount identical to that of his or her previous wage. This financial assistance does not represent a social security benefit, but is paid out of the funds of the hiring enterprises (socialist organizations) or State bodies (national committees). Men and women are equally eligible for this benefit; however, women also receive material assistance in cases when they have been forced to leave a job because the category of the work involved is one of those which have been prohibited to women (or pregnant women).

The laws governing the remuneration of work are based on the socialist principles governing payment in accordance with the amount, quality and social significance of the work performed, without distinction on the basis of sex. The wage and salary directives also ensure the right to equal pay for equal work regardless of sex. All forms of discrimination are forbidden. However, it should be noted that in actual practice women are, on the average, paid somewhat less for their work than men. This circumstance may be explained in terms of vocational training and by the fact that there is a certain period of time during which women, because of their need to care for their children and family, are unable to practise their occupation, to improve and upgrade their qualifications, to acquire the practical experience required for professional advancement and to hold the more

responsible and senior positions, all factors that in turn have an effect on the remuneration they receive in accordance with the principles enunciated above. In addition, women's earning opportunities are limited in some cases by their physical constitution, their physiological characteristics and their role as mothers, all factors that prevent them from performing strenuous physical labour, underground work or work at night or under particularly difficult conditions. This fact also has been taken into account in the legislation of Czechoslovakia, for example in the provision regulating pensions under Law No. 12A/1975 of the Collection (in the text published under Law No. 30/1983 of the Collection), which speaks exclusively of a widow's pension on the death of a husband, payable for a period of one year. Following the expiration of this period, the woman continues to receive the widow's pension only if she meets certain other conditions (age, involvement in the raising of children, disability, etc.). The granting of this pension for one year to all widows is explained by the fact that the loss of the husband implies a considerable financial loss for the family (even if there are no children), while in cases involving the decease of the wife the pension is granted only to orphaned children (in connection with the death of the mother), and not to the husband of the deceased, since it is assumed that he is in a position to support himself. This legal regulation, which is aimed at establishing factual equality between men and women, may in some cases work to the disadvantage of individual men (widowers), but is on the whole consistent with its intended purpose and in conformity with article 11, paragraph 1, of the Convention.

Article 11, paragraph 2

The provisions of this paragraph are satisfied in Czechoslovak legislation primarily through the protection under the law of the work of pregnant women and the mothers of young children (paragraphs 46-49, paragraph 53, subparagraph 3, and paragraph 155 of the Labour Code), the legal regulation of maternity leave for a period of up to 26 weeks and, in the case of single mothers, 35 weeks (paragraph 157 of the Labour Code and paragraphs 1 and 10 of Law No. 88/1968 on the Extension of Maternity Leave, Maternity Benefits and Supplemental Childrens' Allowances to be Paid out of Health Insurance Funds, in the text of later regulations; Law No. 103/1964 of the Collection on Sickness Benefits for Co-operative Agricultural Workers and on the Assistance for Mothers and Children; see full text of this law published under Law No. 51/1976 of the Collection in the text of legal measures No. 8/1982), and monetary maternity allowances paid during this leave in the amount of 90 per cent of the average wage, as well as additional leave without pay until the child completes its second year (paragraph 160 of the Labour Code). If a woman is involved in raising, in addition to a young child of up to 2 years of age, another child of up to 15 years of age, she is eligible under the law (Law No. 107/1971 of the Collection in the text of Code No. 8/1982 of the Collection) to a maternity allowance in the amount of 600 koruny a month (i.e. approximately one quarter of the statistically determined average wage in Czechoslovakia) for one child up to the age of 2 years, 900 koruny a month for two children and 1,300 koruny for three and more children of less than 2 years. In both cases, the woman retains the right to her previous position so that following her return from maternity leave she may resume her previous job, or else, following her next maternity leave, she may return to a position corresponding to her personal employment contract or at least to the qualifications she has acquired (paragraph 147 of the Labour Code).

The Labour Code (paragraph 149) requires that the hiring organizations (enterprises), in co-operation with local State agencies (national committees) and the plant committees of the trade union organization, install, repair and improve sanitation and social facilities for women, build nurseries and kindergartens and other child care centres both at the enterprises and in the residential areas, and adjust the operations of these institutions to meet the needs of working women and mothers.

If a pregnant woman is performing work not permitted to pregnant women in general, or if in the opinion of her doctor the work she is performing represents a risk to her pregnancy, the employing organization must reassign her to other suitable work for which she can receive the same wage. This protection is accorded to the woman up to a period of nine months following childbirth. If the woman is paid a lower wage in her new position, she is entitled to a monetary allowance to be financed out of the health insurance funds of the enterprise in question (paragraphs 4 and 5 of Law No. 88/1968 of the Collection).

The right to maternity leave or to financial maternity assistance for a period of 22 weeks is also enjoyed by an adoptive mother or a guardian to whom a child has been entrusted. These women are entitled, if necessary, to further (unpaid) maternity leave and to a maternity allowance in the same way as all other mothers (paragraph 11 of Law No. 88/1968 of the Collection; Law No. 1760 of the Labour Code; and Law No. 107/1971 of the Collection).

Article 11, paragraph 3

The laws in effect are periodically reviewed. Such reviews have resulted in measures to expand and improve the rights of working women: for example, the extension of maternity leave and the granting of a financial maternity allowance in 1963, the introduction of a maternity allowance in 1971 (increased in 1982), regular increases in children's allowances (most recently in 1982), the regular review of the categories of work for which women may not be hired, etc.

Article 12

The provisions of this article of the Convention are satisfied in Czechoslovakia primarily through Law No. 20/1966 of the Collection on the safeguarding of public health, and by the relevant enabling legislation (particularly Law No. 42/1966 of the Collection on the provision of preventive medical care).

The Czechoslovak Socialist Republic has built an extensive system of medical facilities, including care centres for pregnant women and nursing children. All the services provided by these medical facilities are available to all female citizens of Czechoslovakia on a free-of-charge basis only, this principle also applying to women who enjoy identical rights (alien women enjoying the right of political asylum and women working in Czechoslovakia with the relevant permission of the State authorities).

Article 13

The requirements of the Convention are satisfied both in the regulations governing health insurance and in the general provisions of the law on monetary allowances (paragraphs 335-340 of the Civil Code and Law No. 40/1964 of the Collection in the text published under Law No. 70/1983 of the Collection), as well as in the regulations connected with rest and relaxation, participation in sports and all areas of cultural life (paragraph 140, subparagraph 3, of the Labour Law and Law No. 68/1956 of the Collection on the organization of education through physical work and other subjects).

The supplemental children's allowance is the principal form in which society manifests its concern for families with materially insecure children. These supplemental allowances are awarded, under conditions established by the law, to both men and women who have materially needy children and who are covered by a working contract, or are the members of a co-operative or an agricultural "artel",

or, finally, are self-employed farmers (paragraphs 14 ff. of Law No. 88/1968 of the Collection; paragraphs 30 ff. of Law No. 103/1963 of the Collection; and paragraph 124 of Law No. 128/1975 of the Collection, primarily in the wording of the subsequent legal enactments). These supplemental allowances have risen steadily, as the following table indicates:

Supplemental monthly children's allowance	1968	1972	1979	1982
For one child	90	90	140	180
For two children	330	430	530	610
For three children	680	880	1 030	1 150
For four children	1 030	1 280	1 480	1 640

Article 14

The socialist agriculture of Czechoslovakia is organized on the basis of large-scale production at co-operative or State farms. The private agricultural sector is negligible and indeed very small. The protection of women under the Labour Code (see article 11 mentioned above) applies both to the members of agricultural co-operatives and to State farm workers. In the same way as men, women are also employed in responsible posts in the agricultural co-operatives, where they may hold the position of chairman.

Paragraph 1

Women living in rural areas have every opportunity to apply their skills in agricultural organizations, and frequently do so. Approximately half of the membership of the agricultural production co-operatives are women.

The performance by women agricultural workers of their maternal function is juridically ensured in the same way as for women who work outside the agricultural sector. This also applies to the care for their children of pre-school age. The co-operatives and State farms, using their own funds or funds administered jointly with those of other organizations (in the city), see to the building of facilities for children of pre-school age and finance their operation.

Paragraph 2

For all practical purposes there are, in Czechoslovakia, no "rural areas", since the Czechoslovak countryside is of a mixed character and, given the density of population, maintains lively contacts with the urban centres. According to the Constitution, the equality of men and women is guaranteed and has been written into specific provisions of the relevant legislation:

Subparagraph (a)

Women in rural areas participate in the elaboration and implementation of the national development plan on an equal footing with men. They can bring forward their specific demands primarily through the Czechoslovak Union of Women, the affiliated organizations of which are located in rural areas as well, and through the other organizations of the National Front, for example the Revolutionary Trade Union Movement and Union of Co-operative Farm Workers.

Subparagraph (b)

Women in rural areas are provided with medical attention on the same basis as other women and other citizens. With respect to family planning, these women have the same access as other women to clinical services and counselling.

Subparagraph (c)

Rural women enjoy the benefits of the social security programmes.

Subparagraph (d)

Women in rural areas have the same access to all forms of education at all levels as other women and citizens in general. This also applies to the upgrading of their qualifications.

Subparagraph (e)

Women in rural areas have the same access as all other citizens to the organization of self-help groups and to membership of co-operatives, and they make full use of this right (see, for example, the State-wide network of consumer co-operatives). Rural women perform interesting work within the framework of various National Front organizations.

Subparagraph (f)

There are no obstacles of either a legal or material nature to prevent rural women from participating in community activities.

Subparagraph (g)

Women in rural areas have the same access as all other citizens, within the framework of State or co-operative enterprises, to credit, loans, marketing facilities and technology under land resettlement schemes.

Subparagraph (h)

With respect to housing, sanitation, electricity and water supply, transport and communications, the situation is essentially the same for women living in rural areas and for those living in cities. For example, living conditions in particular villages may occasionally be better than in some towns. All the villages have been electrified and, with few exceptions, connected to the water distribution system. The transport network, including rail and bus lines, is highly developed.

PART IV OF THE CONVENTION

Article 15

With respect to civil legal capacity and competency, the Civil Code confers the same opportunities on men and women (paragraph 7 and Law No. 19/1964 of the Collection in the text published under Law No. 70/1983 of the Collection). The principle of equality is observed, taking into account the joint ownership of the property of the spouses (paragraph 143 and others of the Civil Code on indivisible joint property; paragraphs 143 ff. of the Labour Code).

Article 16

In family and matrimonial relations and in the raising of children, women enjoy the same rights as men. The man is not the head of the family. The legal institution of paternal authority has been transformed into one of parental authority.

Both parents have the same rights and responsibilities with regard to the raising and support of their children. The work of the woman within the home is evaluated in the same way as the man's work outside the home. The Family Law (No. 94/1963 of the Collection) lays down with the utmost clarity the equality of men and women in marriage as the basic principle, in the spirit of which all rights and responsibilities in the area of the family, matrimonial and personal life of the citizen are to be interpreted. Beyond the affirmation of this general principle of equality, the Family Law re-emphasizes, e.g. in speaking of relationships between the spouses, that the husband and wife have equal rights and equal opportunities and are required to live together, to help and be faithful to one another and to create a healthful family environment.

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The Czechoslovak Union of Women is a voluntary public organization bringing together nearly one million women from 12,000 primary organizations. Young women account for 36 per cent of the membership of this organization. Through its work in the area of political education and organization, the Union helps women to become more involved in the political, economic, social and cultural life of the socialist State. The Czechoslovak Union of Women is contributing to steady improvements in the working and living conditions of women and to the successful fulfilment by women of their function as mothers, by helping them to put to use their education and skills in the working world and to participate in management and public affairs. As a public organization of the National Front, the Union has the right to express its opinions on legislation in preparation and on amendments to laws.

In the forefront of the interests of the Union of Women is its concern for the family, for the raising of the young socialist generation and for the development of the cultural, artistic, recreational and sporting activities of women and families. To this end, the Union organizes lectures, meetings and talks with specialists, and arranges for a variety of courses, discussion groups and exhibitions of women's works, as well as art shows, sporting competitions and tourist excursions.

The principal tasks of the Union of Women include participation in the formulation and implementation of the electoral programmes of the National Front. Through these programmes the organization contributes to improving the living conditions of women and families in the cities, to safeguarding and enhancing the natural environment and to erecting children's and youth facilities, shops, and cultural and medical centres.

The Czechoslovak Socialist Republic is deeply involved in international events and is a member of the International Democratic Federation of Women. The country co-operates with progressive organizations throughout the world and lends them its support. Czechoslovakia regards the struggle to preserve world peace and to prevent a nuclear catastrophe as its paramount task.